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Benefits and disadvantages of college sports

Sport is one of the biggest entertainments people ever invented and nowadays sport is an integral part of Americans’ lives. From the very young ages children start practicing sports. Step by step their skills get improved and children get honor to represent their elementary school, after that high school and finally college. After years of practicing children turn in well prepared athletes willing to work hard to become even better and having ability to show sport of exceptional quality, and people are eager to pay for the chance to see them in action. As a result, United States gets excellent athletes without actual government investment in sport; organizations arranging intercollegiate competitions and universities involve in them earn billions of dollars; college athletes get considerable support from universities they represent. However, everything is not so ideal as it seems to be and usually main protagonists of this show, universities and athletes, suffer because of college sports.

Without doubt, positive influence of college athletics must be considered. Despite the lack of sport organizations, USA is always represented by athletes of exceptional level. Great credit for this lies on university sport programs which prepare excellent sportsmen. According to Thomas Rosandich’s *Collegiate sports programs: A comparative analysis*, “the intercollegiate sport competition and training facilities at most large American universities rival that of even the best equipped national sport programs or sport clubs in other nations” (par. 8). Obviously that the huge degree of university support to sport programs makes colleges the best places to develop talented athletes, majority of which represent their own country, the fact that, every year a lot of students become professional athletes, just prove efficiency of college athletic programs. Rosandich writes, “There were a total of 35 college teams that last year [2001] had four or more individuals on an NBA roster for a total of 211 NBA players” (par. 23). According to this information it is safe to say that universities are the main suppliers of future basketball stars. As a result, importance of position held by intercollegiate sports in hierarchy of athletic organizations within United States cannot be questioned.

In addition to the sport aspects, university athletic programs have big influence on economic sector. Thereby, organizations establishing intercollegiate competitions earn incredible amount of money. As Pete DiPrimio writes in *Tribune Business News,* by NCAA Tournament TV contract NCAA will get $10.8 billion in 14 years and NCAA’s football analog, The Bowl Championship Series, gets $174.07 million for 5 matches (par. 5-6).

Universities also benefit because of their college programs. First of all, successful sport teams advertise their own university. University names begin to appear in the review of sport news of TV channels and newspapers. During March Madness, the tournament involving basketball college teams, a lot of people fill tournament brackets and it became so popular that even President Obama was involved in this action. For sure, all these contribute to the promotion of universities’ brands. Universities also have good revenue from their athletic programs. DiPrimio writes that “Thanks to the Big Ten Network, UI had a surplus of $1.1 million. Purdue made $3.3 million” (par. 10).

All universities involved in NCAA have revenue but not all of them have income. Actually, just few universities make money. According to DiPrimio, 206 public universities involved in NCAA’s Division I have expenses higher than revenue they get (par. 9). In general Division I consist of 228 public athletic programs and as you can see just 10% of universities have positive income and it is not surprisingly because income varies according to the amount of played games, so teams which were dropout at early stage simply are not able to make money. As a result, to make money university has to have strong team. University athletic departments usually consist of several different programs and while some of them are successful, others can bankrupt department. Clear example of such department provided by journalist, Michele Voepel, in her blog. According to Voepel, University of California, Berkeley, in 2009 had surplus of $7,026,078 thanks to its football team performance but at the same time other 11 sports men programs caused debt of $3,689,362 (revenue/expense figures). Since income depends on performance of teams, majority of universities are not able to earn money from their athletic programs because someone has to lose and they do it.

Importance of performance of athletic teams for university sport programs undeniable therefore, colleges are eager to recruit most talented athletes. In the interview with Robert Lipsyte, Dan Shanoff said that most talented athletes get scholarships covering their tuition; they also get “super food” and best on-campus housing for free (par. 2). In such way, obvious that, universities are willing to provide a lot of benefits to attract successful high school athletes. Colleges want to have successful athletic departments so much that they do not spare to spend millions of dollars on their own athletes. According to Voepel, full scholarship provided by University of Berkeley worth $24,793 for residents of California and $47,967 for nonresidents per semester (par. 1). All these benefits and support provided by university cause a lot of college athletes to forget about main purpose of universities; they forget about education.

Unfortunately, involvement in college athletic programs takes so much of students’ time that they are simply deprived of the chance to get full education. Athletes spend a lot of their time practicing in order to gain the optimal form in addition to that they have to spend much time on playing official games and even more time for away games. Furthermore, away games force athletes to miss classes because majority of official games don’t take place on the weekend. All those can’t not to affect the academic performance of college athletes. Reasonably that James L. Shulman and William G. Bowen could discover that students not involved in college sports have better academic records than their athlete-classmates do (Feezell par. 9). As a result, majority of those athletes who will not become professional sportsmen not only finish their sport carrier after graduation but they also sacrifice their academic performance and respectively loses chance to get well-paid job. Some people may argue that poor performance in academic classes of athletes has nothing to do with their involvement in sport. However, athletes themselves agree with the fact that sport prevents them from doing academic work. According to the survey provided by Josephine Potuto and James O’Hanlon, 53% of interviewed athletes complain about the lack of time they spend on their academic studying and “Sixty-five per cent state they believe that it [their GPA] would be higher if they [student-athletes] had not participated in a varsity sport”(960). As a result, direct connection between poor academic performance of student-athletes and their involvement in sport can be built. Thus, college athletes are the main protagonists and main victims of intercollegiate sports.

In conclusion, I want to say that college sport plays very important role in lives of American. College sport has already become breathtaking entertainment and a lot of organizations turn it in big business. Students attracted by all benefits provided to them demonstrate great show and bring millions to their universities and organizations arranging sport matches. However, unfortunately, majority athletes nor become sport star after graduation, nor get full appropriate education and society should ask oneself, “Whether we act honestly towards college athletes by getting them cheated of the chance to get higher education?”

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